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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to identify and compare factors influencing teachers of vocational agriculture to continue their careers in the teaching profession. The major data source for the study was a 74-item questionnaire which focused on selected variables identified in previous studies. Responses from 216 teachers (84 percent) were treated and presented in two groups (supervisory district and experience) and in a summary of statements classified as tangible or intangible. Findings indicated that the major reasons that teachers remain in the profession are Future Farmer of America and adult farmer organization activities and teaching situation. Community support was considered to be of great influence across all experience groups except teachers with 20-24 years of experience. Only six tangible factors were perceived as having great influence on teachers' decisions to remain in the profession, while 22 intangible factors were perceived as having great influence. Among the highest ranked intangible factors were (1) satisfaction experienced in helping others and (2) satisfaction and pride in student accomplishment. (The survey instrument is appended.) (LRA)

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IDENTIFICATION AND COMPARISON OF FACTORS INFLUENCING OKLAHOMA VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE INSTRUCTORS TO REMAIN IN THE PROFESSION

A Graduate Study Completed at
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
May, 1979

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IDENTIFICATION AND COMPARISON OF FACTORS INFLUENCING OKLAHOMA VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE INSTRUCTORS TO REMAIN IN THE PROFESSION

James D. White

Introduction

Oklahoma has had a tradition for many years of outstanding vocational agriculture and Future Farmers of America programs. Much of the success enjoyed by Oklahoma Vocational Agriculture is due to devoted teachers with long tenure who were dedicated to the youth of Oklahoma. Vocational Agriculture teachers responded to community and student needs by providing educational experiences and opportunities not only for youth but for adults and young farmers as well. From this coveted position have come continuity and stability that provide strong classroom, supervised farming and community leadership programs.

However, at the present, long tenure as a Vocational Agriculture teacher in many Oklahoma communities seems to be a thing of the past as evidenced by the fact that close to half of the current Vocational Agriculture teaching corps is made up of teachers with fewer than five years teaching experience.

Educational Importance of the Study

It doesn't really seem necessary to establish the importance of having experienced teachers, but yet when we look at the significance of strong classroom, supervised training and leadership programs or the lack of these programs, we realize their impact upon young people and adults training for employment in agriculture. History has indicated that survival of a nation depends on its soil. George Washington said, "I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture..." Therefore, it is more important than ever before in our society of rapid technological change, cost-price squeeze in agriculture, and changing moral and social values that educational programs provide students a solid foundation on which to develop their abilities and define life's goals.

The present trend toward continuing decline in the experience level of teachers has prompted concern as to why teachers leave the profession and how they might be encouraged to remain. This study attempts to determine in a positive manner if there are enticements that influence teachers to continue in the profession. If there are specific influences, what are they and how do they compare by a teacher's experience and by district in which the teachers taught. This research effort presents data which addresses these considerations.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and compare selected

factors influencing teachers of vocational agriculture to continue their careers in the teaching profession. In order to accomplish that intent the following objectives were established in regard to Oklahoma Vocational Agriculture Teachers:

1. To determine the relative importance of selected factors influencing teachers to continue in the profession as compared by supervisory district.

2. To determine the relative importance of selected factors influencing teachers to continue in the profession as compared by years of teaching experience.

3. To compare selected tangible and intangible factors as to their influence on teachers' decisions to continue in the profession.

4. To compare major categories of selected factors influencing teachers to continue in their chosen career.

5. To identify significant differences among responses toward selected factors influencing teachers to remain in the profession by supervisory district and/or experience groups.

Methods

In order to acquire data which would provide information relating to the intent and objectives of the study, a population was determined and an instrument developed for data collection. Procedures were established to facilitate data collection and methodology for analyzing the data.

To assemble information concerning teacher retention in Oklahoma, a closed or restricted form questionnaire was developed (Appendix A). A list of selected variables which included a number of those commonly used in previous studies provided an extensive list of possible variables that respondents participating in previous research efforts perceived as being influential in their decision to remain in the profession.

The format of the current questionnaire included a "Likert-type" scale of selected categories for teachers to indicate responses. Teachers' perceptions of statements within selected categories were used to distinguish the degree of influence perceived as being important in their decision to continue teaching.

The selected factors included in the questionnaire were "classified" as being tangible and intangible.

The questionnaire contained short answer items and statements requiring answers provided on an interval scale. Major topics included background of teacher respondents and "selected categories" which included both tangible and intangible items within categories as follows: monetary considerations, facilities and equipment, administration and

supervision, family and personal opportunities, community support, teaching situation, FFA and adult farmer organization activities, professionalism and advancement and security.

Frequency distributions and means were the descriptive statistics used to describe the demographic data of respondents.

For each statement listed under "selected categories" a frequency count of responses for degree of influence on the five point scale was determined. Mean responses for each statement listed under major categories of influence were calculated on a supervisory district basis as well as by experience group.

One-way analysis of variance was used to determine significant differences among teacher responses by district and teaching experience. In instances where the analyses of variance revealed significant differences, the Duncan's multiple range test was used to identify the specific source of significant difference within district and experience groups.

The "t' test was used to determine significant differences between tangible and intangible factors influencing teachers to remain in the profession.

Data Sources

The major source of data for this study was a seventy-four item questionnaire completed by Oklahoma Vocational Agriculture teachers. The findings were treated and presented in two groups, by supervisory district and by experience groups and a summary of statements classified as tangible or intangible. A total of 256 questionnaires were mailed to "experienced" teachers (57 percent of 448 vocational agriculture teachers). The two hundred sixteen (or 84 percent) teachers returning questionnaires, represented one hundred thirty-five single teacher departments and forty-four multiple teacher programs.

Results and Discussion

A list of "selected factors" within major categories of the teachers' questionnaire was used to determine the relative influence perceived by teachers as being important in their decisions to remain in the profession. Table A shows the mean responses and degree of influence by district. The major areas of influence were listed in descending order according to the magnitude of mean response. Four major areas were considered to be of great influence according to overall mean response. All supervisory districts rated "FFA and adult farmer organizational activities and teaching situations "as being of "great" influence in teachers' decisions to remain in the profession. "Community support" was considered to be of "great" influence in all of the districts except the southwest district where it was of moderate influence. The mean responses indicated all of the districts viewed "monetary consideration" as being of only "some influence."

TABLE A

Comparison of Mean Responses by Supervisory Districts as to Influence of Major Areas on Teachers' Decisions to Remain in the Profession

Major Area of Influence	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southeast	Southwest	Overall Mean	F Value
FFA and adult farmer organizational activities	Great 2.96	Great 3.05	Great 2.91	Great 3.06	Great 2.94	Great 2.99	0.43
Teaching situation	Great 2.63	Great 2.81	Great 2.69	Great 2.72	Great 2.63	Great 2.71	0.68
Community support	Great 2.70	Great 2.76	Great 2.71	Great 2.53	Moderate 2.45	Great 2.64	1.11
Professionalism	Great 2.51	Great 2.58	Moderate 2.37	Great 2.56	Moderate 2.45	Great 2.50	0.59
Administration and supervision	Moderate 2.15	Moderate 2.27	Moderate 2.25	Moderate 2.28	Moderate 2.27	Moderate 2.25	0.15
Family and personal opportunities	Moderate 2.07	Moderate 2.19	Moderate 2.21	Moderate 2.16	Moderate 2.14	Moderate 2.17	0.19
Advancement and security	Moderate 2.15	Moderate 2.12	Moderate 1.92	Moderate 2.08	Moderate 2.10	Moderate 2.07	0.56
Facilities and equipment	Moderate 1.65	Moderate 1.53	Moderate 1.73	Moderate 1.60	Moderate 1.76	Moderate 1.65	0.59
Monetary considerations	Some 0.93	Some 0.99	Some 0.93	Some 1.12	Some 1.19	Some 1.03	1.35

As noted in Table B major areas of influence were listed in descending order according to the magnitude of overall mean response. "FFA and adult farmer organization activities" and "teaching situation" were revealed as being of "great" influence by teachers of all experience groups. "Community support" was considered to be of great influence across all experience groups except teachers with 20-24 years experience. Professionalism was considered to be of "great" importance for teachers with 5-9, 10-14 and 30-39 years teaching experience. It is interesting to note that the teachers with 30-39 years experience indicated that all major areas of influence were considered to be of "great" influence with the exceptions of "facilities and equipment" and "monetary considerations." All experience groups regarded "monetary considerations" to be of only "some" influence.

Tangible factors perceived as being of great influence by teachers were ranked by the magnitude of their overall mean scores. The mean responses, illustrated in Table C, indicate six factors as being of great influence to teachers remaining in the profession. It is interesting that significant differences were observed by district for "opportunity to conduct a 12-month program" and by experience group for "flexibility in my work schedule offered by holiday recesses."

TABLE 8

Comparison of Mean Responses by Experience Groups as to Influence of Major Areas on Teachers' Decisions to Remain in the Profession

Major Area of Influence	(5-9)	(10-14)	(15-19)	(20-24)	(25-29)	(30-39)	Overall Mean	F Value
FFA and adult farmer organizational activities	Great 3.05	Great 2.84	Great 2.84	Great 3.01	Great 2.92	Great 3.39	Great 2.99	1.78
Teaching situation	Great 2.75	Great 2.66	Great 2.54	Great 2.55	Great 2.74	Great 3.14	Great 2.71	2.29*
Community support	Great 2.52	Great 2.78	Great 2.67	Moderate 2.42	Great 2.73	Great 3.13	Great 2.64	2.02
Professionalism	Great 2.50	Great 2.51	Moderate 2.47	Moderate 2.22	Moderate 2.46	Great 3.07	Great 2.50	2.43*
Administration and supervision	Moderate 2.19	Moderate 2.37	Moderate 2.20	Moderate 1.89	Moderate 2.42	Great 2.63	Moderate 2.25	2.43*
Family and personal opportunities	Moderate 1.96	Moderate 2.27	Moderate 2.48	Moderate 2.03	Moderate 2.29	Great 2.58	Moderate 2.17	3.39**
Advancement and security	Moderate 2.04	Moderate 2.21	Moderate 2.01	Moderate 1.80	Moderate 1.99	Great 2.62	Moderate 2.07	2.56*
Facilities and equipment	Moderate 1.64	Moderate 1.78	Moderate 1.72	Moderate 1.18	Moderate 1.84	Moderate 1.70	Moderate 1.65	2.01
Monetary considerations	Some 0.99	Some 1.13	Some 0.95	Some 0.78	Some 1.15	Some 1.31	Some 1.03	2.03

*P ($< .05$)
**P ($< .01$)

TABLE C

Summary of Tangible Factors Which Have "Great" Influence On Teachers' Decisions To Continue In The Teaching Profession

Tangible Factor	Mean Response	Rank
Opportunity to work with livestock	2.99	1
Community's cooperation and support for agricultural activities (FFA, Young Farmers, community fairs, field days, etc.)	2.92	2
Opportunity to conduct a 12-month program	2.77	3 *
Flexibility in my work schedule offered by school "holiday recesses"	2.70	4 *
Student interest	2.66	5
Opportunity to plan summer work load	2.64	6

*P (< .05)

Only six tangible factors were perceived as having "great" influence on teachers' decisions to remain in the profession, while twenty-two intangible factors were perceived as having "great" influence. The selected intangible factors having "great" influence were rank ordered according to the magnitude of their overall mean responses. These twenty-two factors ranged from the highest ranked factor, "satisfaction experienced in helping others," to the lowest, "accessibility to local administration." It is interesting to note that the six highest intangible factors revealed in Table D had larger mean scores than the highest tangible factor. Differences among intangible factors revealed by district were found for "working relationship with district supervisor," "comradeship among fellow teachers" and "enjoyment and satisfaction received from teaching a variety of subject matter areas." Among experience groups "satisfaction experienced in helping others," "freedom to plan and direct my own program" and "satisfaction of providing educational opportunities for young farmers and adults to help themselves" were observed as having significant differences.

TABLE 8

Summary of Intangible Factors Which Have "Great" Influence on Teachers' Decisions To Continue in the Teaching Profession

Intangible Factor	Mean Response	Rank	
Satisfaction experienced in helping others	3.20	1	
Satisfaction and pride in student accomplishment	3.18	2	
Enjoyment received from involvement with FFA activities	3.16	3	
Satisfaction of seeing students take advantage of leadership opportunities	3.13	4	
Opportunities to help young people with the problems of "life"	3.09	5	
Feeling of accomplishment and success	3.07	6	
Recognition received from student accomplishment through competitive activities	2.98	7	
Working relationship with district supervisor	2.97	8	*
Personal satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment in teaching vocational agriculture as a career	2.97	9	
Common bond and mutual concern among fellow Vo-Ag teachers	2.87	10	*
Appreciation for living conditions in a rural environment	2.85	11	
Enjoyment and satisfaction received from teaching a variety of subject matter areas	2.83	12	*
Commitment to the profession	2.81	13	
Recognition of teaching competencies by students and former students	2.79	14	
Freedom to plan and direct my own program	2.78	15	*
Good working relationship between school and community	2.73	16	
Opportunities to work with other professionals in the field of agriculture	2.72	17	
Opportunity for my family to be a part of the community	2.67	18	
"Air" of trust and respect carried by teaching vocational agriculture	2.66	19	
Appreciation and recognition for Vo-Ag teacher's service to the school and community	2.65	20	
Satisfaction of providing educational opportunities for young farmers and adults to help themselves	2.63	21	*
Accessibility to the local administration	2.51	22	

*P (< .05)

A summary of results illustrated in Table E agree with Tables A and B that "FFA," "teaching situation," "community support" and "professionalism" were perceived by the teachers as being of "great" influence in their decisions to continue teaching.

It is also noted that "administration and supervision," "family and personal opportunities," "advancement and security," and "facilities and equipment" were perceived as having only "moderate" influence. In addition it was observed that "monetary considerations" were the least influential of the major categories studied.

TABLE E

Summary of Major Categories of Influence in Regard to Agriculture Teachers' Decisions to Remain in the Teaching Profession by Mean Response

Major Category	Mean Response $\bar{X}$	Degree of Influence
FFA and Adult Farmer Organization Activities	2.99	Great
Teaching Situation	2.71	Great
Community Support	2.64	Great
Professionalism	2.50	Great
Administration and Supervision	2.25	Moderate
Family and Personal Opportunities	2.17	Moderate
Advancement and Security	2.07	Moderate
Facilities and Equipment	1.65	Moderate
Monetary Considerations	1.03	Some

Conclusions

Analysis and interpretation of data reveals that intangible factors are perceived as having greater influence than tangible factors in influencing Oklahoma Vocational Agriculture teachers to remain in the profession. Furthermore, there is apparently a

combination and an interaction of factors in addition to the ones investigated in this study that influence teachers to continue in the profession. Apparently it makes no difference where teachers teach or their experience level in terms of what influences them to remain in the profession. Career teachers of vocational agriculture in Oklahoma continue in the profession as the result of satisfying experiences gained from helping students to achieve, development of close personal relationships and helping plan and direct Future Farmers of America activities. It is also apparent that Oklahoma teachers are motivated to continue their chosen careers as the result of involvement in being able to work with their students on livestock projects and other types of supervised experience programs as well as the freedom to plan and conduct year round vocational agriculture programs. Good working relationships between school and community are valued by many long term teachers as being a positive influence to continue teaching. "Esprit de Corps" among Oklahoma teachers and the high esteem in which they hold for their district supervisors are important reasons for continuing the profession. Acceptance by the local community and a rural environment influence Oklahoma teachers to remain in their present occupations. Transportation provided by the local school district seems to be more influential than the benefits of facilities and equipment for Oklahoman's to continue teaching. Monetary and related benefits apparently are the least influential considerations in regard to teachers staying in the profession.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF OKLAHOMA VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS WITH A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS EXPERIENCE

Name _____ School _____

Age _____ No. of years teaching experience _____

List the schools where you have taught and the number of years in each position:

1. _____ _____
2. _____ _____
3. _____ _____
4. _____ _____
5. _____ _____

Indicate the degree of influence each of the following has had on your decision to continue in the teaching profession.

I HAVE REMAINED IN THE PROFESSION AS A TEACHER OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE BECAUSE OF THE:

	DEGREE OF INFLUENCE					
	Very Great	Great	Moderate	Some	None	Doesn't Apply
Monetary Considerations:						
Standard of living provided by the salary level..						
Reimbursement of away-from-home expenses.....						
Amount of annual salary increases.....						
Retirement benefits.....						
Additional income from conducting Young and Adult Farmer classes.....						
Allowance for personal and/or sick leave.....						
Opportunity to take advantage of group purchase plans (health insurance, tax shelters, credit union, tires, batteries, etc.).....						
Two-week vacation with pay.....						
Fringe benefits provided by local school district (Please list)						
_____...						
_____...						
Facilities & Equipment:						
Transportation provided by local school district.						
Shop size and storage space.....						
Classroom and/or laboratory space.....						
Shop equipment and tools.....						
Livestock equipment.....						
Availability of other facilities eg. (greenhouse, school farm, feedlot, fertilizer & variety test plots, etc.) (Please list)						
_____...						
_____...						
Reward of occupying new facilites.....						
Maintenance and care of facilities and equipment.						
Comfort and apperance of facilities.....						
Other facility and equipment related factors (Please list)						
_____...						
_____...						

Administration & Supervision:

Opportunity for developing my own departmental budget						
Freedom to plan and direct my own program						
Freedom to purchase "needed" instructional materials and shop supplies						
Interest, appreciation and support expressed by the local administration for the VoAg program						
Accessibility to the local administration						
Working relationship with my district supervisor						
Promise of future improvement of facilities						
Administrator's recognition of my ability as a leader among the local faculty						
Benefits of adequate janitorial services						
Other administration and supervision related factors (Please list)						
_____						

Family and Personal Opportunities:

Adequate housing opportunities						
Advantages of home ownership						
Farming operation I conduct in the community						
Advantages of owning a business interest in the community						
Benefits of spouse employment						
Opportunity for my family to feel a part of the community						
Involvement and commitment of my family to the local church and its mission within the community						
Special "ties" of our children and their satisfaction with the school environment						
Satisfaction of my wife toward the potential for opportunities and recognition that teaching vocational agriculture offers						
Close family ties to relatives in the community						
Appreciation for living conditions in a rural environment						
Other family related factors (Please list)						
_____						
_____						

Community Support:

Community's cooperation and support for agricultural activities (FFA, Young Farmers, community fairs, field days, etc.)						
Appreciation and recognition for the VoAg teacher's service to the school and community						
Progressive community climate						
Other community related factors (Please list)						
_____						
_____						

Teaching Situation:

Class size						
Parental cooperation						
Student interest						
Opportunity to conduct a 12 month program						
Opportunity to work with livestock						
Recognition as a leader among other teachers in the local system						
Enjoyment and satisfaction received from teaching a variety of subject matter areas						
Good working relationship between school and community						
Opportunities to work with other professionals in the field of agriculture						
Satisfaction experienced in helping others						
Feeling of accomplishment and success						
Opportunity to plan the summer work load						
Flexibility in my work schedule offered by school "holiday recesses"						
Other teaching related factors (Please list)						
_____						
_____						

FFA & Adult Farmer Organization Activities:

Satisfaction and pride in student accomplishment						
Enjoyment received from involvement with FFA activities						
Satisfaction of providing educational opportunities for young farmers and adults to help themselves						
Opportunities to help young people with problems of "life"						
Recognition of teaching competencies by students and former students						
Satisfaction of seeing students take advantage of leadership opportunities						
Recognition received from student accomplishment through competitive activities						
Other FFA and Adult Farmer related factors (Please list)						
_____						
_____						

Professionalism:

Commitment to the profession						
Financial security and the mutual support provided by co-workers under $10-$20 Pete Gailey Plan						
Recognition as a leader among peers in the profession						
"Air" of trust and respect carried by teaching Vocational Agriculture						
Common bond and mutual concern among fellow VoAg teachers						

Opportunity for professional improvement.....						
Opportunity to encourage outstanding students to enter the Voag teaching profession.....						
Other professional related factors (Please list)						
_____....						
_____....						

Advancement and Security:

Security of tenure.....						
Potential for advancement in the local school system.						
Potential for advancement in the Vocational Agriculture profession.....						
Potential for advancement in related agricultural professions.....						
Talents and skills that I possess which are better utilized in teaching than in other occupational areas.....						
Personal satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment in teaching Vocational Agriculture as a career....						
Other advancement and security related factors (Please list)						
_____....						
_____....						